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DEPT. FOR EAP/K AND S/NKP
DOD FOR OSD/APSA -
GREGSON/MITCHELL/SCHIFFER/BASALLA/ARAKELIAN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MNUC](#) [MARR](#) [KN](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: ASD GREGSON DISCUSSES NORTH KOREA AND CHINA WITH
MOFA DG SAIKI

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James P. Zumwalt, reasons 1.4 (b /d).

11. (S) Summary: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asian and Oceanian Affairs Director General Akitaka Saiki said in a November 17 meeting with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Wallace Gregson that the Japanese government fully supports U.S. bilateral engagement with North Korea in an effort to convince North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks. Saiki cautioned that the United States should "go slow" and not be "beguiled" by North Korea. The main issue is not convincing North Korea to return to the talks, but rather the content of future negotiations, in particular how to address the "verification" component of the "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement" of nuclear weapons programs. Saiki found merit in South Korea's "Grand Bargain" approach as it is similar to that of Japan. Key to a successful outcome of future negotiations will be close coordination between the United States, Japan and South Korea, he said. Regarding China, ASD Gregson and Saiki agreed to conduct further meetings to explore the possibility of conducting enhanced U.S.-Japanese military operational planning and training as a rational way to respond to China's military buildup. End Summary.

12. (S) On November 17, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Wallace Gregson met Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Asian and Oceanian Affairs Director General Akitaka Saiki to discuss recent developments regarding North Korea and China. Saiki opened by telling ASD Gregson that he is very pleased with the close coordination between the USG and the Government of Japan (GOJ) regarding U.S. policy toward North Korea in general, and the operational and substantive details of the planned bilateral meeting between Special Representative for North Korea Policy Ambassador Stephen Bosworth and North Korean interlocutors in particular. Noting that he was repeating the words of Prime Minister Hatoyama to the President, and those of Foreign

Minister Okada to Secretary of State Clinton, Saiki said the GOJ fully endorses U.S. diplomatic efforts to engage North Korea bilaterally to encourage North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks. That said, Saiki cautioned that the United States need not "rush" to North Korea. Saiki mentioned that Japan had gone through similar, relationship-thawing experiences with North Korea, and noting that he was invoking the words of Secretary of Defense Gates, he cautioned the United States not "to buy the same horse twice."

13. (S) Saiki said he does not want to discourage U.S. efforts to lead North Korea back to the Six-Party Talks, but does not want North Korea to get the impression that the international community will do anything simply to get it back to the negotiations. The main issue is not North Korea's return to the talks, he said, but rather the substance of negotiations after they restart. In Saiki's view, verification is the main issue. Saiki noted that in December 2008, the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) had agreed to a very high standard of verification, but that agreement fell apart due to "poor handling by the Chinese chair." This time, Saiki continued, the United States, GOJ and ROK need to have a well-coordinated game plan before going back to Beijing for the talks. Saiki emphasized that it will be very important for the United States, Japan and the ROK to coordinate a negotiation plan quietly and closely prior to the actual negotiations. Saiki also mentioned that the GOJ is "sympathetic" to, and sees merit in, the ROK-envisioned Grand Bargain approach, primarily because it is similar to the GOJ's own design.

14. (S) ASD Gregson assured Saiki that the United States does not plan to reward or give North Korea anything simply for returning to the Six-Party Talks, and emphasized that a "Grand Bargain" is possible only after North Korea agrees to the complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of its nuclear weapons programs. ASD Gregson underscored that a foundation of alliance solidarity among the United States, Japan and ROK, coupled with a broader international consensus regarding United Nations Security Council resolutions, is the best way to compel North Korea to act responsibly. The United States does not plan to pursue extended bilateral contact with North Korea, but is willing to meet bilaterally as part of the multilateral effort to get North Korea back to the negotiations, he added.

15. (S) Turning to the recent exchange of gunfire between ROK and DPRK naval vessels along the Northern Limit Line (NLL), Saiki asked if the U.S. assesses the incident as accidental or intentional. ASD Gregson noted that such incidents had been tracking farther and farther north along the NLL, and that the United States had not yet made a final assessment regarding this most recent one. PDAS Donovan added that the fact that North Korea had not followed up the clash with its usual high-volume vitriol indicates that it may be trying to calm tensions.

16. (S) Turning to China, Saiki said that the GOJ is concerned about China's military buildup and its aspirations to build its own aircraft carrier. In response to a question from Saiki, ASD Gregson noted that the United States considers China's military development to be a concern, and China's explanation of the buildup to be unsatisfactory. As such, ASD Gregson continued, the defense interests of the United States and Japan would be best served by enhanced U.S.-Japan dialogue. ASD Gregson suggested that Japan and the United States conduct more bilateral planning and training at the operational, not simply tactical, level. Such training will show China that the United States and Japan are more capable of working together militarily, and would be a rational response to China's military buildup, he added. Saiki expressed his support for the plan and for the need for further bilateral consultations. ASD Gregson ended by noting that he would welcome the consultations and that he looked forward to building a planning and training program.

17. (U) ASD Gregson was accompanied by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific

Affairs Joseph Donovan, the DCM, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia Michael Schiffer, Embassy Pol Min/Couns, Embassy Pol-Mil Chief and Embassy notetaker. Director General Saiki was accompanied by MOFA Northeast Asia Division Director Junji Shimada, MOFA Northeast Asia Deputy Director Shunji Maeda and MOFA China and Mongolia Division Deputy Director Manabu Ota.

18. (U) ASD Gregson cleared this cable.
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